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UNCLAS HARARE 001329

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TREASURY FOR OREN WYCHE-SHAW  
PASS USTR FLORIZELLE LISER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON

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SUBJECT: THE UNBEARABLE STRANGENESS OF LAND REFORM

1. (SBU) Summary: Just when you thought the debate over land reform could get no stranger it does. Amid the clamor about ZANU-PF and GOZ bigwigs receiving more than one farm, inter-factional fighting within Zanu-PF has resulted in the GOZ-controlled Herald newspaper inadvertently praising former white commercial farmers and exposing the faults with land reform. End Summary.

NKOMO AND MOYO SPAR PUBLICLY

2. (SBU) Land Minister, and ZANU-PF Secretary General, John Nkomo has renewed his effort to locate and take away properties from Zanu-PF and GOZ heavyweights who have violated the stated one-family one-farm standard for fast track land reform. A list of 329 violators has become public and Nkomo has sent letters to top officials requesting that they divest extra farm holdings. Included on this list is Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, the force behind the GOZ's invidious state media.

3. (U) In response, The Herald of August 1, 2004 has, as its lead article, the story of an underutilized Lynton Farm owned by the Land Ministry Permanent Secretary Simon Pazvakambwa. According to the article, "Irrigation equipment worth millions of dollars and other farming implements are lying idle . . . while workers on the plot allege that they have not been paid since May".

4. (U) The article states that tobacco barns and pigsties lay unused and only one maize field and one groundnut field were planted last year. The workers stopped work on July 3 due to lack of payment of their "meager salary of Z\$52000 each" (less than US\$10) a month. The reporter then recounts pregnant women's stories of their reliance upon well-wishers for survival. Pazvakambwa promised to plant wheat this season but has not done so.

5. (SBU) In classic expose style, the article closes with an interview with Pazvakambwa. He demands to know the sources for the story and refuses to comment further. The story claims, however, that Pazvakambwa let slip that he will pay the workers immediately.

HERALD REMINISCES ABOUT WHITE FARMERS

6. (U) The truly surreal quality of land reform, however, comes out in the article's portrayal of the white farmer who owned Lynton Farm. According to one of the workers at the farm, "around this time Mr. Malzer would have put tobacco and paprika seed and would be planting early maize for December." The reporter describes how Malzer "used to grow paprika, maize, tobacco and ran a thriving cattle ranch and piggery".

COMMENT

7. (SBU) Zimbabwe's surreal environment has the GOZ-controlled Herald praising the former white farmer's utilization of Lynton Farm, as compared to its current underutilization by a GOZ bigwig, when it was GOZ that removed the white commercial farmer in the first place. Yet in the heat of Zanu-PF primaries leading up to next year's parliamentary elections, hardliners like Moyo care more about undermining moderates like Nkomo than attacking whites. It is a strange twist in political discourse here.

8. (SBU) Nkomo and the Land Ministry are not likely to simply take the criticism. The Herald's expose of Lynton Farm may lead to further articles in the independent and semi-independent press about the state of affairs on other farms owned by party and GOZ bigwigs. In the process of inter-factional fighting, these very public disagreements may discredit the entire land reform process, providing an entertaining spectacle as Zanu-PF discredits its own touted policy.

Sullivan